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~ Dirty Malware Tricks! ~ Parents Lax With Kids! ~ Cyber Sit-Ins?

$$= \sim = \sim = \sim =$$

"Saying it like it is!"

Until next time...

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"I personally believe that China will be back on the Moon before we are. I think when that happens, Americans will not like it, but they will just have to not like it. I think we will see, as we have seen with China's introductory manned space flights so far, we will see again that nations look up to other nations that appear to be at the top of the technical pyramid, and they want to do deals with those nations. It's one of the things that made us the world's

greatest economic power. So I think we'll be reinstructed in that lesson in the coming years and I hope that Americans will take that instruction positively and react to it by investing in those things that are the leading edge of what's possible."

Now, I'm going to be honest with you on two points. First, if Mr. Griffin was standing in front of me right now, I'd kick him square in the throat. Second, I've got no freakin' idea of what a large portion of that paragraph is supposed to mean, but the part about Americans learning to take instruction positively seems to be saying: "Okay, it's too expensive and too hard for us to lead the way these days, so we're going to have to get used to coming in second and letting China get not only the glory but the technology deals with the rest of the world, and it'll be easier on you if you just accept it now."

Excuse me??

I'll admit that, since I grew up in the Gemini/Apollo era (Not to mention that I grew up watching Star Trek... which taught me all I need to know about life, by the way), this idea is repugnant to me, both morally and politically.

I was too young to remember Kennedy's speech to Congress, but it's burned into my mind nonetheless. In it he said:

"First, I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him back safely to the earth. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish."

Let those words roll around in your mind for a minute... No single space project will be more impressive to mankind, but none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish. He didn't say "Hell, it'd be way cool to have Americans on the moon, but it's just too hard and would cost too much money. We should just let the Russians do it."

I'd like to point out that, at the time Kennedy said that, the Russians were, without dispute, ahead of us in the "space race", what with Sputnik and all. In fact, it only really became a race when we decided to compete. It was our will, our collective intelligence, and our resolve that allowed us to not only compete, but to come from behind and "win".

In my mind, the one circumstance that probably kept our space program from continually expanding and reaching farther into the cosmos each time is the fact that 'we' ended up being the only ones to set foot on the moon. It was like running a race and, while crossing the finish line, looking back to see everyone else still standing at the starting point, waving you on and wishing you well. That's not a race, and you're not very likely to want to run another one right away.

A year and a half after Kennedy's jump-starting speech to Congress, in a speech at Rice University, he said two things that have always stuck with me, and which I would like you to remember:

"No nation which expects to be the leader of other nations can expect to stay behind in this race for space."

and:

"We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

Now whether you liked JFK or not, you've got to admit that those are two very powerful statements. There is perhaps no better statement of what used to be American Ideals than those two sentences. And I apologize, but today's "Gonna git 'em" and "It's hard to put food on your family" just don't measure up. Even President Bush's "Moon, Mars and Beyond" initiative is little more than a thinly veiled grab at some support from "the eggheads". Did he really think that no one would realize that, even though he's stated some lofty goals, he's postponed them until well after he'll be out of office and it'll be "someone else's problem"? Did he think that we wouldn't notice the shift away from actual support to election year rhetoric?

True, I'm no great lover of our current White House resident, but even if I were, I'd be incensed that 'we' just put through, with hardly any debate at all, a nearly two hundred billion dollar addition to the budget for the conflict in Iraq.

Think about that... \$200,000,000,000.00... two hundred BILLION dollars! And that's additional, not the total military budget.... and not over x-number of years... that's for the coming year only.

By comparison, the Hubble Space Telescope is estimated to have cost a total of six billion dollars. That STILL sounds like a lot of money, doesn't it? And it is. That's a whole lot of cash by anyone's standards. But that's also spread over more than 30 years... from its inception. Even if you only figure from it's launch until now, you're talking about 17 years (if you figure from when funding was first approved to the planned de-orbiting of the HST, it's more like 42 years).

I guess that there will always be people who will complain that this money is just being "thrown out into space" while there are legitimate problems here on Earth that the money could be used for.

Of course, those people studiously avoid the fact that the space program has yielded great advances in energy generation, materials science, medicine, ergonomics, physiology, physics, computing, telecommunications and a dozen other areas of research. Our fighting men and women in Iraq are benefiting from the composite materials in their helmets and bullet-proof vests (those who have been lucky enough to finally GET them) made of new, 'space-age' materials, many of which were developed either directly or indirectly as a result of the space program (hence the 'space-age' tag)... stronger, lighter materials for the shuttle and space station, EVA suits, etc.

Perhaps someone should put the idea into Mr. Bush's head that there is a brutal dictator with weapons of mass destruction out near Alpha Centauri, and that he played a key role in the events of 9/11, that he hates our freedom, and that if we don't fight him there, we'll only have to fight him here. Perhaps THEN we'll be able to listen to a government official stand up and say, "Yes, it's going to be expensive,

yes, it's going to be hard, yes, we're going to have to invent whole new materials and industries, but we can do it. We can do it not because we're Americans, but because we are America. Because if someone must lead the world in space exploration, it should be us. Because we are born of explorers. We will do this not out of fear, but out of strength and out of hope. Not because we wish to hoard the rewards of these endeavors, but because we wish to share them with all of mankind."

Is anyone out there in the wings writing THAT speech?

Okay, okay, I'm going to wrap it up in a minute. But I want to leave you with one final thought. If every nation on Earth used the per-capita energy resources that the United States uses, we'd need the resources of THREE Planet Earths to support them! Now, we know that there are resources out there... hydrogen (for fuel) in the atmospheres of the gas giant planets, methane (also for fuel) in the atmospheres of many of their satellites, metals (both precious and non-precious for construction of whatever we want to build) throughout the asteroid belt, and water... water perhaps everywhere from the deep, dark recesses of the Moon's south pole to the sub-surface of Mars to Europa and Callisto around Jupiter, and Dione and Titan around Saturn, and still more water in the bodies that orbit in the Kuiper Belt and Oort Cloud.

Do we REALLY want to let a country like China simply take the initiative and grab for these resources? Let's face it, folks... if we do that, some day you may have to worry about moon dust contamination in your grandkids' Legos!

Well, perhaps next week there will be enough messages in the NewsGroup to put together a good Q&A column. Tune in again next week, kids, (same time, same station) and we'll take a look at what they're saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - "Halo 3" Is Launched!
    """""""""" AI Is A-OK In New Games!
                Euro Jag Fest 2007!
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Microsoft Readies "Halo 3" For Launch

Video game aficionados lined up before dawn on Monday for the midnight release of "Halo 3," the acclaimed alien shooter game that Microsoft Corp. hopes will widen its lead over Sony Corp in the battle for industry dominance.

The equivalent of a new "Harry Potter" book or "Star Wars" film for the \$30 billion video game industry, "Halo 3" has drawn wide praise from reviewers for its lush settings, cinematic story and breadth of features.

Positive buzz about the science-fiction game - in which players try to save humanity from an army of aliens - pushed Microsoft shares up as much as 3.35 percent, their biggest one-day gain since April.

Microsoft is counting on "Halo 3" to push its money-losing entertainment unit into profitability. The game is the final chapter in a trilogy that began in 2001 with the launch of the software giant's original Xbox game console.

"I was caught between buying the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, but there are certain games like 'Madden '08' and this one that pushed me to Xbox 360," said Darnell Jefferson, 25, who was second in line at a Best Buy store on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue.

"Halo 3" will enjoy the absence of another blockbuster game, "Grand Theft Auto IV," whose October debut has been delayed by publisher Take-Two Interactive Software Inc until the some time between February and April 2008.

Microsoft is backing its game with a marketing blitz that includes celebrity-studded midnight sales events at some 10,000 retailers across the United States.

Gaming retail chain GameStop Corp said the title set a record for advance orders, while Microsoft expects initial demand to surpass that for 2004's "Halo 2," which racked up \$125 million in its first 24 hours.

Uchendu Nwachukwu, 28, a freelance Web designer who was first in line at the Best Buy store, said buying the game was not as important as experiencing what will probably be a major media event when the doors open at midnight.

"They are going to make it a big event, lots of celebrities out here, concerts and prizes, all sorts of craziness," said Nwachukwu, who claimed his space at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, nearly 30 hours before the launch.

"If it was just about the game," he said, "I would have gone on Tuesday to the store and got it."

The first two "Halo" games have sold a combined 15 million copies and cemented Microsoft as a serious player in a video game industry that was dominated by Sony Corp's PlayStation 2.

Microsoft hopes "Halo 3" will work similar magic for its Xbox 360. The console debuted in late 2005 and has enjoyed stronger sales than PlayStation 3, which is more expensive and so far lacks any "system-seller" games like "Halo 3."

"Halo 3" is targeted firmly at the Xbox's core audience of young males,

for whom realistic combat games are a staple. It does little to widen the machine's appeal to a more casual audience that is being courted with tremendous success by Nintendo Co Ltd's Wii console.

The title is "not necessarily going to move a lot of new systems like the first 'Halo' did," said Dan Hsu, editor-in-chief of the EGM gaming magazine.

"At the same time, with all the marketing blitz and hype, consumers will be out there," Hsu said, "and if they are thinking video games, they are thinking one of two things: 'Halo' or the Wii."

Microsoft Launches "Halo 3"

Microsoft Corp began selling "Halo 3" on Tuesday, hoping the acclaimed alien shooter game will widen its lead over Sony Corp in the battle for industry dominance.

Some game enthusiasts lined up before dawn at a Best Buy store on New York's Fifth Avenue to grab a good seat for the launch extravaganza while others took advantage of the retailer's offer to let them pay for a copy of the game and pick it up at midnight or the next day.

Alex Escobar was the first one at the store's checkout counter, turning in a receipt to pick up his advance order.

"It is worth it. It is time to finish this fight," Escobar said, echoing the tagline for a game featuring a futuristic soldier battling to save humanity from an alien onslaught.

What had been a only a modest gathering earlier in the day had swelled to a crowd of about 500 people that cheered as buyers entered the store, resembling other big consumer debuts this year, such as the last "Harry Potter" book and Apple Inc's iPhone.

"Halo 3" is seen as the \$30 billion video game industry's equivalent of a new Potter book and Microsoft is counting on the game to finally push its money-losing entertainment unit into profitability.

"This is a critical holiday in terms of winning the next-generation console fight versus our competition and nobody has anything to go up and match 'Halo,'" Shane Kim, vice president of Microsoft Game Studios, told Reuters Television.

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At a Best Buy near Microsoft headquarters outside Seattle, company founder Bill Gates was cheered by a crowd of more than 500 people when he emerged from the store to shake hands.

Gates personally sold and autographed the first copy to Ritesh David, a

17-year-old who was stunned to find himself being served by the richest man in America.

"I gotta check your ID to see if you're 17," Gates said, in a joking reference to the game's "mature" rating, meaning it is intended for customers 17 and older.

The first two "Halo" games have sold a combined 15 million copies and cemented Microsoft as a serious player in a video game industry that was dominated by Sony's PlayStation 2.

"Halo 3" is targeted firmly at the core Xbox audience of young males, for whom realistic combat games are a staple. It does little to widen the machine's appeal to a more casual audience that is being successfully courted by Nintendo Co Ltd's Wii console.

"It's not necessarily going to move a lot of new systems like the first 'Halo' did," said Dan Hsu, editor-in-chief of EGM, a gaming magazine.

"At the same time, with all the marketing blitz and hype, consumers will be out there," Hsu said, "and if they are thinking video games, they are thinking one of two things: 'Halo' or the Wii."

Microsoft is certainly betting that the last chapter of the Halo trilogy will give a further boost to its latest console. The Xbox 360, launched in late 2005, has already enjoyed stronger sales than the pricier PlayStation 3, which critics say so far lacks any "system-seller" games.

"I was caught between buying the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, but there are certain games like 'Madden '08' and this one that pushed me to Xbox 360," said Darnell Jefferson, 25, who was second in line at Best Buy, referring to the hit football game made by Electronic Arts Inc.

"Halo 3" will benefit from the absence of another blockbuster game, "Grand Theft Auto IV," whose October debut was delayed by publisher Take-Two Interactive Software Inc until some time between February and April 2008.

The latest "Halo" has drawn wide praise from reviewers for its lush settings, cinematic story and breadth of features, positive buzz that pushed Microsoft shares up as much as 3.35 percent on Monday, their biggest one-day gain since April. The stock ended 1.5 percent higher at \$29.08 on Nasdaq.

AI Is A-OK In New Games

Our video-game enemies are smart - and getting smarter. The artificial intelligence that guides in-game characters today leads to far more natural actions and realistic friends and foes than in the past. "As graphics improvements top out, artificial intelligence will (drive) game innovation," says University of California-Santa Cruz professor Michael Mateas. A look at AI evolution:

Halo 3

Players will notice more enemies aiming to thwart the Master Chief - and more artificially intelligent marines to help him along in this new

campaign.

Where battlefields in previous Halo games might have had 15 or so combatants, Halo 3 will feature as many as 40 enemies and allies fighting intelligently. Typical Halo 2 enemies or squad mates had at most about 50 behaviors; in Halo 3, programmers have upped that to as many as 70. Each character has more rules attached to each behavior - up to 10,000, compared with 10 in the past.

The computer-controlled characters use their AI brains to calculate all these rules in milliseconds just as humans' can, and their actions are harder to predict. In the past, a Covenant "brute" (an alien attacker) would likely seek cover when you fired on him. Now the enemy can deploy a bubble shield, hold its ground, assess the situation and perhaps find a method of attack.

Microsoft, out today, for Xbox 360, \$59.99, \$69.99 limited edition, \$129.99 Legendary Edition with Spartan helmet case. Rated M (mature) for ages 17 and older.

* Developer comment: "The interaction of all those rules is absolutely unpredictable," says Damián Isla of developer Bungie. "There is simply no way that I as a programmer can predict what is going to happen next. What we get is 'emergence,' one of the holy grails of AI: some really complex, interesting results out of very, very simple rules."

Enemy Territory: Quake Wars

The Earth-invading Strogg are id Software's craftiest enemies yet, having evolved from basic hunters with a limited understanding in Quake II into tactically aware combatants who might use disguises, are aware of their teammates' status, can revive them and instantly begin a retaliatory response.

Your computer-controlled "bot" teammates are just as smart and will aggressively provide cover for you rather than simply act as escorts. Playable as an online multiplayer game, Quake Wars also has enough AI capacity to let you simulate an online game offline, pitting you and 15 AI teammates against 16 AI opponents. Choose what class you want to play as - soldier, field ops, medic, covert ops or engineer - and the game automatically fills out the rest of your squad. (Players can also play as the Strogg.)

Previous id games could devote no more than 10% of the hardware's processing power to AI. Now that PCs and game systems have multiple processors, nearly an entire processor can be dedicated to handling AI.

Developer comment: "The more processing power you have to allocate to AI, the more time you can have (AI characters) thinking about interesting tactical actions," says John Dean, id's artificial-intelligence programmer.

Activision, out Oct. 2, for Windows PC, \$50, \$60 for limited collectors edition, also in development for PS3 and Xbox 360, rated T (teen) for ages 13 and up.

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

In 2005's Call of Duty 2, the last game developed by Infinity Ward, the Nazis were your World War II enemy. This new game is set in the present

That means players and the AI enemies have access to more advanced weaponry and vehicles. The amount of processing power and memory capacity devoted to the AI alone in Call of Duty 4 is equal to the horsepower needed to run all of Call of Duty 2.

Your troops are smarter and will reward proper tactics. Previously, if a player charged into an unsafe firefight, his band of brothers charged right along. Now, they will analyze the situation and may decide to hold their position, letting you suffer the consequences.

Activision, out Nov. 5, for Xbox 360 and PS3, \$59.99, for Windows PCs, \$49.99, rated M.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online      -          Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Of course other classic consoles are welcome too. Frequent guests are the NUON with games like Iron Solider 3 and Tempest 3000 among other exotic

systems. However having a blast playing games, is just one part of the event. The event is also frequently used by homebrew developers from all Europe to show their new developments and some were even exclusively for sale. One example was the limited e-jagfest edition of Starcat's "Jag Mind Bomb Squad" for Jaguar CD, as well as other "Starcat Developments" releases.

There also were some new VCS 2600 games such as "Raster Fahndung" and "Encaved" on display. Matthias Domin was a frequent visitor too, always with different demos and games to show.

This year we offer visitors something very special. Gaztee from England, owner of one of only two working and never released Jaguar-Virtual-Headsets took our invitation to Kaarst. Of course he won't keep his biggest treasure hidden away. Unless something unexpected happens, you will be able to experience and unveil the myth of the Jaguar VR-Helmet yourself. You may be excited.

Some people have the privilege of owning a rare prototype game. E-JagFest is a great opportunity to discuss about it on the event and let people experience it themselves. Another topic is network play. You rarely ever have the chance to play Battlesphere networked, and thus enjoying one of the rarest and best Jaguar games with theoretically up to 16 people. Four player duels in Checkered Flag on Lynx (no, not the Jag version ;-)), are also very popular on the event.

Smaller fun competitions such as "Club-Drive" or "Kazumi Ninja" guarantee a great mood.

In the last years there also always was at least one retailer attending, to offer new and used Jaguar games. Nick Harlow of "16/32 bit Systems" has announced his visit already.

On E-JagFest we don't know the meaning of boredom. All of you who want to chat with fellow gamers or developers or who enjoy playing games are welcome, regardless of their favorite system.

In case you do not own an Atari system, don't panic! Just bring your favorite classic system with you, or drop by as visitor only to enjoy the atmosphere and games and let the spirit amaze you. There is always room for you.

This year's event is the 7th e-jagfest and taking place for the fourth time in Kaarst.

Entry is on 24th November at 10:30 in the morning. Entrance fee is 5 Euro.

The official e-jagfest website recently moved and the site is currently under construction. More information about the event will be online very soon.

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Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Laptop Project Set For 2 Weeks In November

The project that hopes to supply developing-world schoolchildren with \$188 laptops will sell the rugged little computers to U.S. residents and Canadians for \$400 each, with the profit going toward a machine for a poor country.

The One Laptop Per Child project expects that its "Give One, Get One" promotion will result in a pool of thousands of donated laptops that will stimulate demand in countries hesitant to join the program. It will be offered for only two weeks in November.

Originally conceived as the "\$100 laptop," the funky green-and-white low-power "XO" computers now cost \$188. The laptops' manufacturer, Quanta Computer Inc., is beginning mass production next month, but with far fewer than the 3 million orders One Laptop Per Child director Nicholas Negroponte had said he was waiting for.

Negroponte said the availability of donated laptops would not be the sole condition for many countries weighing whether to place multimillion-dollar orders. But "it just triggers it," he said. "It makes it all happen faster."

By opening sales to people in the U.S. and Canada at <http://www.xogiving.com>, "Give One, Get One" will delight computing aficionados, because the XO is unlike any other laptop.

It has a homegrown user interface designed for children, boasts built-in wireless networking, uses very little power and can be recharged by hand with a pulley or a crank. Its display has separate indoor and outdoor settings so it can be read in full sunlight, something even expensive laptops lack.

The machines use the Linux open-source system and don't run Windows; Negroponte expects that to be possible soon, but Microsoft Corp. insists it can't guarantee that, given the machine's idiosyncratic specs.

The catch is that "Give One, Get One" will run only from Nov. 12 to Nov. 26. Negroponte said the limited availability is partly necessary so the nonprofit doesn't run afoul of tax laws, but mainly designed to create scarcity-induced excitement.

"We need that burst," he said.

Just the first 25,000 buyers will be promised delivery of their XOs by the Christmas season. Everyone else will be on a pace reminiscent of the old Sears Roebuck catalog, with the computer probably arriving in January.

Then again, most buyers figure to be motivated more by the "Give One" aspect than the "Get One" part. Negroponte said that dynamic is beginning to pervade the program, with several poor countries finding that richer governments are willing to act as sponsors.

For example, Italy is buying all 50,000 XOs that Ethiopia will get in the program's first wave. Now Negroponte is trying to encourage similar

arrangements with governments in Europe and Asia, with Pakistan and Afghanistan among the possible recipients. Megabillionaire Carlos Slim is expected to purchase 25,000 XO's and lend them to Mexican children.

Thailand, Uruguay, Nigeria, Brazil, Libya and Rwanda are among the countries that could be in the first wave of laptop customers, though specifics have not been announced.

Given all the innovations in the XO and the discussions it has inspired about computers in education, One Laptop Per Child - a spinoff from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology - can claim significant achievements. However, Negroponte hoped to be further along by now.

In September 2005, he was saying that 5 million to 15 million machines might be in production in 2006, with perhaps 100 million out by now. In April 2006 he foresaw 5 million to 10 million XO's dotting the landscape in 2007.

Now 250,000 to 300,000 are due to be made by the end of this year. Negroponte expects that to ramp up to 1 million a month next year, though he still lacks signed orders for that many.

One reason things may have gone slower than predicted is One Laptop Per Child's impending emergence awoke commercial vendors to the promise of a low-cost international educational market. Now governments considering buying XO's for their youngsters have multiple options in the \$200 range - including more-conventional computers that can run Windows. Negroponte acknowledges the absence of Windows led Russia to say no.

One of the laptop program's unabashed admirers is Miguel Brechner, who runs a government-funded technology group in Uruguay. Brechner has been overseeing a test of 200 XO's in a Uruguayan village and believes the laptops have stimulated collaboration and raised expectations for children. He expects to buy many more XO's as Uruguay soon begins to outfit all 400,000 of its primary schoolchildren with laptops.

"I'm absolutely a believer that this will change the country," Brechner said.

But not all of those computers will be XO's. To hedge its bets, Uruguay probably will buy other inexpensive laptops as well, including Intel Corp.'s Classmate PCs. Brechner argues that Windows is a better option for older kids who are closer to entering the computing work force.

"We will see (what happens) in the field and change whatever is necessary," Brechner said. "We will make some mistakes. We don't know who to copy on this."

Europe and U.S. Try To Calm Storm Over Microsoft

European and U.S. antitrust regulators tried to calm a transatlantic storm on Thursday over a European Court ruling that Microsoft used monopoly power to muscle rivals, but did not back down over policy differences.

European and U.S. officials were careful at the high-profile Fordham antitrust conference to avoid antagonizing each other after a sharp

exchange last week between U.S. Department of Justice antitrust chief Thomas Barnett and European Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes.

Last week, the European Union's Court of First Instance in Luxembourg upheld a landmark 2004 European Commission decision and a 497 million euro fine against Microsoft Corp for illegal business practices that violated antitrust law.

At the conference on Thursday, U.S. Federal Trade Commission Chairman Deborah Majoras said a European Court had explicitly rejected the U.S. approach, and Brussels and Washington now needed to find better ways to co-operate.

Majoras had a hand in fashioning the U.S. remedies against Microsoft in 2001 after the company was found to have violated U.S. antitrust law. The U.S. remedies requiring limited licensing of some Microsoft connection information - far less than the Europeans - won approval from U.S. courts. But some states have criticized the U.S. sanctions as ineffective.

Majoras said Europeans and Americans need to aim for "co-operation and enhanced discussion" about their antitrust treatment of individual company behavior.

Her carefully calibrated remarks contrasted with those of Barnett, her counterpart at the Justice Department. Hours after the Microsoft ruling, he issued a news release accusing the European court of "chilling innovation and discouraging competition" with its 248-page decision. That brought a stinging rebuke from European Competition Chief Neelie Kroes.

The rebuke was echoed in milder terms after Majoras spoke on Thursday, when British Office of Fair Trading Chief Executive

John Fingleton said: "The other point that's important to recognize in this is respect for different jurisdictions' autonomy."

Fingleton called convergence a "two-way process" and suggested that U.S. courts had emasculated U.S. agency power by throwing out a Justice Department case against American Airlines that accused the carrier of lowering prices to drive a low-priced airline out of business.

"It really is going to be quite difficult ever to find true predatory pricing liability in the United States with the case law that's there," he said.

At one point, the No. 2 official of the European Commission's competition department spoke up from the floor.

"On this question of convergence ... We have to make efforts here," said Philip Lowe.

But he strongly defended the care his agency used in gathering facts against Microsoft and questioned how long an agency should wait to act.

"We're talking about a long lasting position of dominance," he said. "Is 10 years too short or too long? Is 15 years too short or too long?"

Kroes, speaking later, also urged cooperation between U.S. and European regulators, as well as respect for differences between the two.

"We have looked with interest at the way you have tackled ... issues over

here and have drawn some useful lessons from your experiences," she said. "In this as in so many other areas, there is a very broad degree of consensus across the Atlantic about the problems to be addressed, even if the solutions we design are not always exactly identical in every detail, reflecting our different geopolitical environment, legal tradition and culture."

AOL Co-founder Backs New Online Payment Firm

Steve Case, the founder of the AOL Internet service, is backing a new online payment company that promises to let users transfer funds for free and offer a credit card with sharply lower fees for merchants.

The new venture, Revolution Money, said it will let users transfer money to individuals and online merchants for free through its Revolution MoneyExchange service. The payment system is in a pilot stage.

Revolution Money will go up against popular online payment systems such as industry leader PayPal from eBay Inc and one offered by Web-based retailer Amazon.com Inc.

An initial partner will be AOL, which will let users make payments and fund transfers through its AIM instant messaging service for free, Revolution said.

The company also said it will offer RevolutionCard, a credit card with an interchange fee of 0.5 percent, compared with an average of 1.9 percent for other cards.

Interchange fees are those a merchant pays to a credit card company when a customer makes a purchase.

Revolution said it could offer a lower rate because of its Internet-based payment system, adding that the savings could be passed on to consumers.

Users can also obtain an anonymous credit card with no name or account number on it, something that could cut the risk of identity theft, fraud and problems stemming from lost or stolen cards, Revolution said.

The company is backed by Case's investment firm, Revolution LLC, which led a \$50 million round of venture capital funding that also included Citi and Morgan Stanley.

Case co-founded AOL, originally America Online, and later merged the company with Time Warner Inc. He resigned from Time-Warner's board in 2005 to focus on Revolution.

Cities Turning Off Plans For Wi-Fi

Plans to blanket cities across the nation with low-cost or free wireless Internet access are being delayed or abandoned because they are proving to be too costly and complicated.

Houston, San Francisco, Chicago and other cities are putting proposed

Wi-Fi networks on hold.

"Wi-Fi woes everywhere you turn," says Russell Hancock of Silicon Valley Network, a troubled Wi-Fi project for 40 towns in California's high-tech corridor.

Wi-Fi allows laptop users to work anywhere, making some jobs portable. It also is essential to mobile devices, including iPhones, enabling such emerging technology to perform complex online tasks fast.

Chicago couldn't reach agreement with service providers after offering free use of street lamps for radio transmitters in exchange for a network built, owned and operated by providers at no cost to the city.

"All these big city projects were doomed to failure because they were too complicated," says Glenn Fleishman of Wi-Fi Networking News. Service providers, he says, want city governments to sign up as long-term customers to offset costs. Wi-Fi can help police, firefighters and inspectors access information quickly.

Some cities, including San Francisco, hoped to provide free service for most users offset by ad revenue. Others, such as Springfield, Ill., wanted to give free service to low-income residents and charge everyone else competitive rates. Minneapolis charges about \$20 a month.

"It's too soon to say" what Chicago will do next, chief information officer Hardik Bhatt says. The city decided that decreasing consumer demand and competition mean Wi-Fi might not succeed without a big city investment.

EarthLink, one company negotiating with Chicago, is scaling back its Wi-Fi business. "We will not devote any new capital to the old municipal Wi-Fi model that has us taking all the risk," CEO Rolla Huff said last month. "That model is simply unworkable." EarthLink's announcement also derailed citywide Wi-Fi in San Francisco and Houston.

Elsewhere:

- * Cincinnati shelved its plan last week for a citywide network because the market is too unstable.

- * The Silicon Valley plan for free Wi-Fi is at risk after providers decided local governments must be "anchor tenants" for the service.

- * Springfield, Ill., is looking for another partner after AT&T dropped Wi-Fi plans last month.

- * St. Louis is trying to figure out how to power Wi-Fi transmitters on 1,700 street lights when they're not illuminated without spending millions of dollars.

There are successes. Minneapolis is installing its system in phases. By next year, Oakland County, Mich., plans to offer Wi-Fi to 400,000 customers. "Everybody needs the Internet," Deputy County Executive Phil Bertolini says, "and we want it available to everyone."

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez on Thursday urged the Senate to make permanent the moratorium on taxes for Internet access and electronic commerce.

In a statement, the cabinet secretaries said passage of legislation keeping the Internet free of access taxes by the time the current moratorium expires on November 1 would help keep the Internet an "innovative force."

The Senate Commerce Committee is expected to consider a bill to extend the moratorium on Thursday. The ban has been in place since 1998 and was last reinstated in 2004 for a period of three years.

Internet service providers say the price of Internet access could rise by as much as 17 percent if the moratorium on state taxes were allowed to expire.

"Preventing the taxation of Internet access will help sustain an environment for innovation, ensure that consumers continue to have affordable access to the Internet, especially high-speed Internet, and strengthen the foundations of electronic commerce as a vital and growing part of our economy," Paulson and Gutierrez said.

Facebook Under Pressure To Protect Kids

Facebook, the second-largest social-networking site, must respond within "a few weeks" to requests by state attorneys general that it do more to protect kids from sexual predators, says Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal.

"If Facebook slams the door, we would consider legal options," says Blumenthal, who has negotiated with Facebook. He says the company must verify users' ages, among other things, and he expects a response within a month.

Blumenthal says Facebook "talked the right talk" at a meeting Sept. 17, but "it has a long way to go before we'll be satisfied."

A group of attorneys general has been investigating and negotiating with the rapidly growing company. Blumenthal said in July that investigators in his state found that at least three convicted sex offenders had profiles on Facebook.

New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo said this week that his investigators, who posed as young teens on the site, received sexual advances from adults and readily accessed pornographic images. Cuomo subpoenaed Facebook for documents on the security it promises its 43 million users and how it resolves complaints. He said Facebook should not promote itself as a safe website unless it protects kids.

Facebook, based in Palo Alto, Calif., declined to comment. It released a statement Monday that said it was taking Cuomo's concerns "very seriously." The statement read, "As our service continues to grow so does our responsibility to our users to empower them with the tools necessary to communicate efficiently and safely."

Attorneys general have increasingly pressured social-networking sites to improve safety for kids. MySpace, the largest such site, launched a database in May that checks its users against sex-offender registries.

It has deleted the profiles of at least 29,000 offenders, some of whom were on parole and have since been sent back to prison because using the site violated conditions of their parole.

Fewer predators appear to be soliciting kids on Facebook than on MySpace, but that may change now that Facebook allows anyone to register, says North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper.

Facebook, launched in a Harvard dorm room in February 2004, was initially open only to college students. In 2005, it allowed in high school students and last year opened up to everyone.

Cooper says the attorneys general want Facebook to require parental consent before someone under 18 can register and to verify the ages of its users.

Social-networking companies say adults' ages can be verified by searching public databases such as driver's license records but verifying children's ages is tricky. Michael Angus, chief counsel at MySpace, said in a June interview that his company has yet to find a way to do it reliably.

New Activist Tool: Cyber Sit-Ins

Dan Lohrmann, Michigan's chief information security officer, found out about the cyber sit-in from a reporter. It was Tuesday, May 15, 2007, and a group calling itself the Electronic Disturbance Theater asked Michigan residents to voice their opposition to proposed cuts in state healthcare programs by targeting the Michigan gov Web site.

Over the next two days, participants accessed the group's Web site and downloaded a small browser plug-in that repeatedly hit Michigan.gov. Though Electronic Disturbance Theater sees its actions as a mixture of performance art and civil disobedience, to Lohrmann, it looked very much like a denial-of-service attack.

"Had a million people joined in, it would have been interesting," says Lohrmann. "Not in a good way."

To Lohrmann's relief, far fewer than 1 million people hit the Michigan.gov site on the day of the sit-in. Web counters reported a jump of several hundred thousand page views-- about a 10 percent bump in traffic. Cyber sit-ins came of age nearly a decade ago, but recently, these disruptions have been cropping up again.

There was a "sit-in element" to the attacks on Estonia's online infrastructure, according to Jose Nazario, senior security engineer at Arbor Networks. Though many of these attacks were conducted via networks of hacked, botnet computers, the attackers also created code that anybody could download to voluntarily turn their PC into part of the protest.

Lohrmann was struck by the type of people who were drawn into the

Michigan protest. "This was parents working with bad guys," he says.

Unlike DoS attacks, cyber sit-ins do not really have to disrupt service to be effective, says Dorothy Denning, professor of defense analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif. Like the sit-in protests of the 1960s, these actions are effective whenever they bring publicity to a particular cause. "That's mostly what they do," she says. Electronic Disturbance Theater may not have taken down Michigan.gov last May, but the Michigan press and this magazine covered the cyber sit-in, Denning points out. "Obviously they're getting a little publicity," she says. And that may just be enough for the activists.

Five of the Dirtiest Malware Tricks

If the crooks behind viruses, Trojan horses, and other malicious software were as stupid as they are scummy, we'd have a lot less to worry about. But as protective measures get better at stopping the obvious attacks, online creeps respond with underhanded moves to invade your PC. Here are five of their dirtiest tricks, all based on Trojan horses.

Don't mind me - I'm only here to break your PC: It's like sending in a different scout each time to open the gate for the rest of the invaders. The "Glieder Trojan" and many others use a multistage infection process whose first step is a tiny program that the crooks can change constantly so your antivirus watchdog is less likely to recognize it. Once it gets in, the downloader tries to disable your security before pulling down the real payload, which could be a data stealer or anything else the attacker wants.

Locked and encrypted Web sites? No problem: Web sites can and should use secure socket layer (SSL) to encrypt and protect sensitive data such as bank account log-ins. (When a lock icon appears in the address bar, that indicates the site is using SSL.) But the "Gozi Trojan" and its ilk evade SSL protections by making Windows think they're part of the process, so your data leaves IE and goes through Gozi before it's encrypted and sent out on the network. Instead of spying on your keyboard, which many security programs watch for, these apps roll into the OS as fake layered-service providers (LSPs).

Malware that scans your PC for malware: An extra antivirus scan can only be a good thing, right? Not when it just gets rid of rivals to the "SpamThru Trojan." This nasty introduced a pirated, pared-down version of Kaspersky AntiVirus (which Kaspersky has since shut down) to delete other malware so it could have the victim PC to itself to use as a spam sender. If the PC had a real antivirus app, SpamThru would attempt to block its updates, preventing it from identifying new threats.

Equal-opportunity encryption: Encrypting sensitive data and protecting it with a password helps shield it from prying eyes. But the "SpyAgent Trojan" enters the encryption game, too. When installed on a Windows PC with the Encrypting File System (which is included in Windows 2000, XP Pro, 2003 Server, and 2005 Media Center), SpyAgent establishes its own administrator-level user account and uses this account to encrypt its files. You - or your antivirus software - would have to guess the account's random password to decrypt and scan the malicious files to confirm they weren't supposed to be there.

Hi, firewall. I'm Windows Update. Honest: Firewalls protect computers and networks from bad guys' efforts to go in or out. So the "Jowspry Trojan" masquerades as something known and approved - Windows Update. The crafty malware makes its connections look like the Background Intelligent Transfer Service used by Windows Update, and unsuspecting firewalls let it download more attack programs to your PC.

To pull off these sneaky ploys, malware first has to get on your PC. If you keep Windows and other programs up-to-date, avoid opening attachments or clicking links in unsolicited e-mail, and use a good antivirus program, you won't give the crooks a chance to put their Trojan horses to work.

Descriptions based on research and analysis from Peter Gutmann at the University of Auckland, Craig Schmugar and Aditya Kapoor at McAfee's Avert Labs, and Joe Stewart at SecureWorks.

For an inside look at the way Internet attackers buy and sell their insidious tools, read "An Inside Look at Internet Attackers' Black Markets." To ensure that you've closed critical software holes, read "Close the Holes Targeted by the MPack Attack Kit."

Parents Worry About Web But Don't Stop Kids' Use

Most U.S. parents said their children had encountered "issues" like bad language, sex or advertising online over the past year, but they are not stopping their kids' Internet use, according to a new study.

A survey by market researcher Harris Interactive of 411 parents of children aged between 6-18 who use the Internet found 71 percent admitted their child had encountered at least "one issue" with the Internet within the past year.

But four out of five parents said the Internet helped their children in school and only three in 10 parents - or 31 percent - said their children spent too much time online.

Rather than banning or restricting online access, parents were found to be taking an active role in monitoring their children with 93 percent engaging in some sort of monitoring activity, said the survey released on Tuesday.

"The poll confirms that parents continue to have issues with their kids' Web use, but those issues aren't scaring them away from letting their kids go online," said James Steyer, CEO of Common Sense Media, which commissioned the study with Cable in the Classroom.

The survey, conducted on August 16 and 17, was released a day after New York State Attorney General Andrew Cuomo said his office had subpoenaed Facebook, the social networking site, for not keeping young users safe from sexual predators and not responding to use complaints.

It found that 24 percent of parents reported their kids were exposed to strong language, sexual or violent content online over the past year and 52 percent of parents said their child was exposed to advertising.

But to address these problems 74 percent of parents visited Web sites

with their children, 56 percent reported using a filter or blocking software, and 55 percent would visit a Web site before their child.

It also found that 85 percent talked to their children about online safety in the past year.

"We know parents understand that talking to their children about using the Internet is a really important thing to do," said Helen Soule, executive director of Cable in the Classroom.

Shock! Teenagers And Parents Are Talking

The family meal may be threatened with extinction but "High-Tech" parents are now communicating much better with their teenagers and giving them more freedom, says child psychologist Richard Woolfson.

Long gone are the days when parents were much more dictatorial and children were to be seen, not heard.

"The consultation, negotiation and mutual respect that goes on between parents and teenagers in families today would probably shock the mums and dads of 50 years ago," Woolfson said in a study of how family communication has evolved.

Sitting round the table together for a meal was once the bedrock of family life. It is now becoming a thing of the past but Woolfson stressed that was not the end of the world.

"Now we have today's high-tech family where family communication takes place by email, internet, webcam and mobile phone as well as face-to-face of course," he said.

That has another beneficial side-effect, Woolfson said in his survey for the T-Mobile phone company.

Parents are now able to contact their kids much more easily and children have become more confident and communicative.

"This means that parents are less worried about their children's safety because they feel reassured," Woolfson said.

And the generation gap is not suffering.

"Even grandma and grandpa have entered the world of cyber space to keep close contact with their children and grandchildren, all of which can only be good news for everyone," Woolfson concluded.

Computer Club Explores 'Nerd Auction'

Looking to recruit more women, and perhaps date some sorority women, the largest computer club at Washington State University is exploring a "nerd auction."

The idea is for members to trade their computer skills for a makeover

and, possibly, a date.

"You can buy a nerd and he'll fix your computer, help you with stats homework, or if you're really adventurous, take you to dinner!" Ben Ford, president of the Linux Users Group, said on its Web site recently.

Ford acknowledged that some of the group's 213 registered members may not be ready for the auction block.

"The problem is that we're all still nerds. Let's face it, guys. If anyone's going to bid on us, we'll need some spicing up," he wrote. "And who better to help with that than sorority girls who like nothing better than a makeover?"

The plan is to have the auction open to the general student population and co-sponsored by a sorority. Ford has spoken to several sororities, but so far none has committed. A call to the Center for Fraternity and Sorority Life at WSU by The Associated Press was not returned.

The idea began as an effort to recruit more women into computer science programs, the Moscow-Pullman Daily News reported. A public relations class decided to help by studying the social dynamics of the Linux group, which focuses on the use of the computer operating system.

"Our conclusion was that they need to promote themselves better. Then specific ideas were presented to them," said professor Moon Lee, who taught the public relations class. "They made suggestions to work with specific groups such as sororities. Sorority groups tend to have a very good social network."

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